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SUBJECT: EU'S TAKE ON THE SINO-EU STRATEGIC DIALOGUE:
"SURPRISINGLY PRODUCTIVE"

REF: 08 BEIJING 4272

Classified By: Classified by Deputy Political Section Chief Ben Moeling
, Reasons 1.4 (B/D).

11. (C) Summary: In contrast to previous years, the January 19 Sino-EU Strategic Dialogue was surprisingly productive, according to the Czech Embassy. After an initial Chinese diatribe on Tibet, the remainder of the dialogue was open, friendly, and "more than just talking points." Though the formal agenda did not include discussion of Russia, the Chinese side noted that China seeks influence in Central Asia, Russia remains the primary player in the region, and therefore Sino-Russian cooperation in the region must continue. The EU urged China to provide additional "on the ground" cooperation in Afghanistan, while China in turn urged the EU to put pressure on India to recognize Pakistan's actions responding to last year's Mumbai terrorist attacks. For the first time in the history of the Sino-EU Strategic Dialogue, China did not raise Taiwan. End Summary.

Atmospherics: Productive, Upbeat, Positive

12. (C) The China-EU Strategic Dialogue was "surprisingly productive," particularly when compared to previous dialogues, Czech Embassy Second Secretary Veronika Musilova told PolOff January 21. (Note: The Czech Republic currently holds the six-month rotating presidency of the EU.) Chinese Vice Foreign Minister (VFM) Li Hui and Czech Deputy Foreign Minister Tomas Pojar participated in the January 19 dialogue held in Beijing. With the exception of a Chinese set-piece opening statement that focused largely on Tibet and the Dalai Lama, the dialogue "went beyond talking points" and was generally upbeat and friendly in tone, Musilova said.

Unpleasantness First: Tibet in Opening Remarks

13. (C) VFM Li's prepared opening statement on Tibet was "friendly and proper, but very strong," Musilova said. EU Commission Political Counselor Alex McLachlan characterized the Tibet speech as a "thirty- minute diatribe" rehashing well-known talking points. In response to Pojar's statements that the cancellation of the EU-China summit last year (reftel) was due to a misunderstanding, VFM Li responded "harshly," according to McLachlan, that Europe's policy on Tibet was the root of the problem.

Russia to the Forefront

¶4. (C) The two sides discussed Russia at length, partly because of the personal backgrounds of the two interlocutors. VFM Li is a Russia expert with experience at the Chinese Embassies in Moscow and Kazakhstan, while Pojar has done extensive work on democracy building, rule of law and human rights in post-Soviet states in Eastern Europe. Musilova recounted that Pojar said he was a great supporter of the "color revolutions," while VFM Li jokingly suggested that "counter-color revolutions" may be the best way to promote stability in the region. VFM Li conceded that although China seeks influence in Central Asia, for now Russia remains the primary player in the region. Therefore, Li concluded, Sino-Russian cooperation in the region must continue.

Pakistan and Afghanistan

¶5. (C) Regarding the current situation in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, VFM Li said that stability in the region was the ultimate goal. He warned Pojar that lingering tension over the Mumbai terrorist attacks still had the potential to destabilize South Asia. He noted the progress that Pakistan had made in pursuing the terrorists, and urged the EU to pressure India to cooperate more with Pakistan. In a discussion of Afghanistan, VFM Li highlighted China's investment in the Aynak copper mine, a large mining operation in Logar Province. The Czech Government runs the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Logar Province, Pojar stated. He urged cooperation and open lines of communication between Chinese and Czech officials on the ground in Afghanistan, for the safety and benefit of all parties involved.

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Iran

¶6. (C) Noting that stability in the Middle East is in China's best interests, given China's considerable commercial and energy investments in Iran, the EU stressed that Iran's continued nuclear ambitions are destabilizing the region and may at some point lead to a military confrontation. The Chinese side responded noncommittally, according to EU Political Counselor McLachlan, and indicated that China would wait until the change in U.S. administrations before committing to any policies on Iran.

Other Topics: Somalia, Gaza

¶7. (C) Discussions on Gaza during the dialogue were "nothing new," according to Musilova, with China stressing the importance of UN Security Council Resolution 1860. The EU thanked China for its support in combating piracy off the Horn of Africa.

Courtesy Call with Dai Tense

¶8. (C) Following meetings with VFM Li, Pojar paid a courtesy call on State Councilor Dai Bingguo, which swelled from a scheduled 20 minutes into an almost two-hour recap of the dialogue. Dai stressed the importance of cooperation and urged the EU to continue working with China on trade and other projects. He noted the "great opportunities" for cooperation between China and Europe and, using a tone that Musilova characterized as "slightly threatening," warned that "others may capitalize" if those opportunities are not realized.

Significant Topics Not Discussed: Taiwan, Uighurs

¶9. (C) In notable contrast to previous dialogues, the Chinese side did not raise Taiwan, whereas previous EU-China strategic dialogues covered the topic at length, Musilova

said. She expressed hope the China and Europe have finally "moved past" the Taiwan question. The post-Tiananmen EU arms embargo and the potential resettlement of Chinese citizen Uighurs currently detained at Guantanamo to a European country were other "watch out for" items that did not come up, Musilova said.

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